

PROTECTED LANDMARK DESIGNATION REPORT**LANDMARK NAME:** The Brent House**OWNERS:** Ms. Barbara Caesar Brent**APPLICANTS:** Ms. Barbara Caesar Brent**LOCATION:** 7977 Tate Street, Settegast Heights, Houston, Texas,
77028**AGENDA ITEM:** A**HPO FILE NO.:** 21PL190**DATE ACCEPTED:** 02/05/2021**HAHC HEARING:** 04/22/2021

SITE INFORMATION: Lot 13, Block 10 Settegast Gardens Sec. 4, City of Houston, Harris County, Texas. Designation is requested for the one-story house. The building is 1,162 square feet on a 6,299 square foot lot.

TYPE OF APPROVAL REQUESTED: Protected Landmark Designation

HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE SUMMARY:

The Brent House is a one-story, frame vernacular house built c. 1950 in the Settegast Gardens subdivision within the historic Settegast Heights neighborhood in northeast Houston. The house has been owned by the Brent family since the 1950s. It was moved to its current location at 7977 Tate Street in 1957 by Mr. Dennis and Mrs. Elva Brent. Their daughter, Ms. Barbara Caesar Brent, is the current owner. She is active in the community civic club and in the ongoing efforts to preserve the history and historic resources of the neighborhood. The Brent family is highly regarded in the community; their home is widely known as "The Brent House." Local residents speak of the family and the house with great affection. If designated, this house will be the first landmark and protected landmark in Settegast Heights.

Settegast Heights contains many historic resources, but there are also several vacant lots becoming increasingly desirable for new development. Currently, there are no historic districts in the area, nor any properties in Settegast that have landmark or protected landmark status.

The current owner, Ms. Barbara Caesar Brent, is seeking a protected landmark designation for 7977 Tate Street to preserve the house, record its history and ensure that it remains a part of the neighborhood's historic housing stock. The Brent House meets criteria 1, 4 and 8 for landmark designation and criteria 1 for protected landmark designation.

HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE*SETTEGAST HEIGHTS*

Settegast Heights (also known as Settegast) is located in northeast Houston, bordered by the 610 Loop, the Union Pacific Railroad's Settegast Yard and the old Beaumont Highway. The area was first developed by German land speculators, William J. and Julius J. Settegast, in 1892. Although lots were

purchased in this area throughout the early 1900s, it was largely developed as a planned community in the 1940s when it was settled by African Americans. Much of the housing was built from the 1940s to the 1960s. Settegast was annexed by the City of Houston in 1949.

According to Susan Rogers and Rafael Longoria in their 2007 *Cite Magazine* article, “The Rurban Horseshoe: Historic Black Neighborhoods on the Periphery,” Settegast Heights was advertised to African Americans as an “inexpensive neighborhood.” The streets and lots were platted in the 1940s, yet the houses were dispersed widely and it is not uncommon to see livestock grazing in vacant lots. The authors describe the neighborhood as “rurban” – a term introduced in 1918 to describe the blend of urban and rural communities. Rodgers and Longoria explain that, “These autonomous communities came about in part because of legally enforced segregation – which increased in Southern cities following emancipation, and also because blacks were seeking independence and opportunity in an area where rural traditions were still strong.”

Settegast Heights was a self-contained community with many black-owned businesses including grocery stores and shopping complexes, hair salons, eateries and entertainment venues. Settegast Heights has a strong religious tradition with a high concentration of churches, approximately one per every 60 residents. Many churches serve as the community centers of the neighborhood. Several of the churches are in former houses and storefronts. Like many independent, flourishing black communities in Houston, Settegast was impacted by the loss of businesses, infrastructure and population density in the 1960s and 1970s.

The historic housing stock in Settegast Heights consists of predominantly vernacular architecture, as well as some ranch-style houses, 21st-century townhouses and new residences. There are also several vacant lots, which are becoming increasingly desirable for new development. Currently, there are no historic districts in the area, nor any properties that have landmark or protected landmark status.

SETTEGAST GARDENS SUBDIVISION

The Brent House is located in the Settegast Gardens subdivision, which first opened in 1952. Four sections were developed within the subdivision. Sections 1 and 2 were developed from 1952 to 1953. Sections 3 and 4 opened in 1954. The Charles E. Buckner Company, which specializing in general real estate, handled the sales for the subdivision. Their office was located at 5301 Settegast Road.

An advertisement in the May 29, 1952 edition of the *Houston Chronicle* described the new subdivision as containing “choice homesites and business lots” with a bus line and shelled streets; light, gas and telephone connections were available for the homes. In addition, the seller offered warranty deeds and guaranteed titles. The lots were offered starting at \$10 down and \$10 monthly per month.

HISTORY OF 7977 TATE STREET

According to the Harris County Building Assessment records, the house at 7977 Tate Street was moved to this location in 1957 by the owner Dennis Brent. The current owner, Ms. Barbara Caesar Brent, was a young girl when the house was moved (possibly from the Fifth Ward neighborhood). She suggested that

the house was built in the early 1950s. 7977 Tate Street first appeared in the Houston City Directory in 1958.

OWNERSHIP HISTORY

Mr. Dennis John Brent, Sr. (b. November 8, 1915, d. December 16, 1979) and Mrs. Elva Marie Marks Brent (b. December 16, 1916, d. September 22, 1995)

Mr. Dennis John Brent, Sr. was born on November 8, 1915 in Louisiana to Morris Brent and Idella Lockett. He was a leaderman (subforeman) for the ARMCO Steel Corporation. His wife, Mrs. Elva Marie Marks Brent, was born on December 16, 1916 to Louis Marks and Elizabeth Mathew in Louisiana. Elva worked as a housekeeper. Dennis and Elva married around 1936 and had five children – George, Idella, Dennis John Brent, Jr., Margaret and Barbara. Dennis and Elva moved from Louisiana to Houston in 1941 or 1942. They resided on Hailey Street for some time, as well as on Liberty Road. Dennis and Elva Brent were members of Our Mother of Mercy Catholic Church in Fifth Ward until St. Peter Claver Catholic Church was built in Settegast in 1964.

In 1957, Dennis moved the Brent House to 7977 Tate Street. His daughter, Ms. Barbara Caesar Brent, was actively involved in the process of moving the house. She recalled how Tate Street was mostly open land at the time with very few houses and an abundance of farm animals, including cows, ducks, chickens and horses. She worked with her father in transplanting trees and grass to the new homesite from their previous lot, as it was mostly bare of vegetation when they moved the house.

Dennis died on December 16, 1979 in Houston and is buried in Cemetery Beautiful. Elva continued to reside at 7977 Tate Street until she passed away on September 22, 1995. The property became the “Brent Elva L. Estate” in 1995, according to the Harris County Appraisal District ownership history. One of the sons, George Brent (born in 1939), owned the property until he passed away on October 12, 2010. Ms. Barbara Caesar Brent became the owner shortly thereafter. She moved back to the family home 11 years ago and continues to reside there.

Ms. Barbara Caesar Brent was born in Louisiana in 1941. When her parents moved to Houston, she continued to reside in Louisiana with her grandmother until she was around 4 years old. Her mother brought her and her brother to Houston around 1946, but the family visited Louisiana every summer. Ms. Barbara attended Our Mother of Mercy Catholic School through the 7th grade, and then E. O. Smith Junior High. She graduated from B. C. Elmore High School in 1960. Ms. Barbara studied at San Jacinto School of Nursing and has been a licensed vocational nurse for 33 years. She had six children, four of whom are living today, as well as twelve grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

Ms. Barbara Caesar Brent’s sister, Ms. Margaret Brent, lives next door. The Brents are highly regarded, long-term residents in the Settegast Heights community. The house at 7977 Tate Street is widely known as “The Brent House.” Ms. Barbara Caesar Brent and Ms. Margaret Brent are the only surviving children of Mr. Dennis and Mrs. Elva Brent. The Brent sisters are active in the community civic club and in the ongoing efforts to preserve the history and historic resources of the neighborhood.

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION AND RESTORATION HISTORY*ARCHITECTURAL STYLE**American Vernacular*

7977 Tate Street is an example of a one-story vernacular residence. In her *A Field Guide to American Houses*, Virginia McAlester states American Vernacular architecture's significance period as circa 1930 to the present. Identifying features include simple geometric forms, covered porches and balconies, uncomplicated roofs, walls clad with one dominant material (generally wood, stone or brick) and few stylistic details.

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

The Brent House at 7977 Tate Street is a one-story, frame vernacular residence. It has a low-pitched, hipped roof with boxed eaves. The roof is covered in composition shingles. The house sits on a concrete block foundation.

The asymmetrical front façade is covered in wide horizontal siding and contains two bays. The first (left) bay contains three, side by side windows encased within a decorative frame. There is one, 2-over-2 sash window on either side of a plate glass window.

The second (right) bay contains a partial width, inset, screened porch with a solid balustrade.

There is an attached carport on the right side of the house.

RESTORATION HISTORY

There have been no significant changes to the house since it was moved to the site.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Findagrave.com, Index. December 2020.

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 _____, "First Showing, Settegast Heights Annex." December 3, 1950.
 _____, "Settegast Heights Annex." March 4, 1951.
 _____, "Announcing Opening: Settegast Gardens." May 29, 1952.
 _____, "Settegast Gardens Homes Section 2." April 12, 1953.
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Susan Rogers and Rafael Longoria, "The Rurban Horseshoe: Historic Black Neighborhoods on the Periphery," Published in 2007 Cite Magazine. Accessed December 2020.
<https://www.cdrchouston.org/publications>

McAlester, Virginia Savage. *A Field Guide to American Houses: Revised and Expanded*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2013.

The information and sources provided by the applicant for this application have been reviewed, verified, edited and supplemented with additional research and sources by [Planner Name], Planning and Development Department, City of Houston.

APPROVAL CRITERIA FOR LANDMARK DESIGNATION

Sec. 33-224. Criteria for designation

(a) The HAHC, in making recommendations with respect to designation, and the city council, in making a designation, shall consider one or more of the following criteria, as appropriate for the type of designation:

S	NA	S - satisfies	D - does not satisfy	NA - not applicable
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>			
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- ☐ ☒ (6) Whether the building, structure, object or site or the buildings, structures, objects or sites within the area are identified as the work of a person or group whose work has influenced the heritage of the city, state, or nation;
- ☐ ☒ (7) Whether specific evidence exists that unique archaeological resources are present;
- ☒ ☐ (8) Whether the building, structure, object or site has value as a significant element of community sentiment or public pride.

AND

- ☐ ☒ (9) If less than 50 years old, or proposed historic district containing a majority of buildings, structures, or objects that are less than 50 years old, whether the building, structure, object, site, or area is of extraordinary importance to the city, state or nation for reasons not based on age (Sec. 33-224(b)).

Sec. 33-229. Criteria for protected landmark designation

S	NA	S - satisfies	D - does not satisfy	NA - not applicable
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>			
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

HAHC RECOMMENDATION

EXHIBIT A
CURRENT PHOTO
THE BRENT HOUSE
7977 TATE STREET, HOUSTON, TEXAS 77028



PHOTO BY PRESERVATION HOUSTON

EXHIBIT B SITE MAP

THE BRENT HOUSE
7977 TATE STREET, HOUSTON, TEXAS 77028

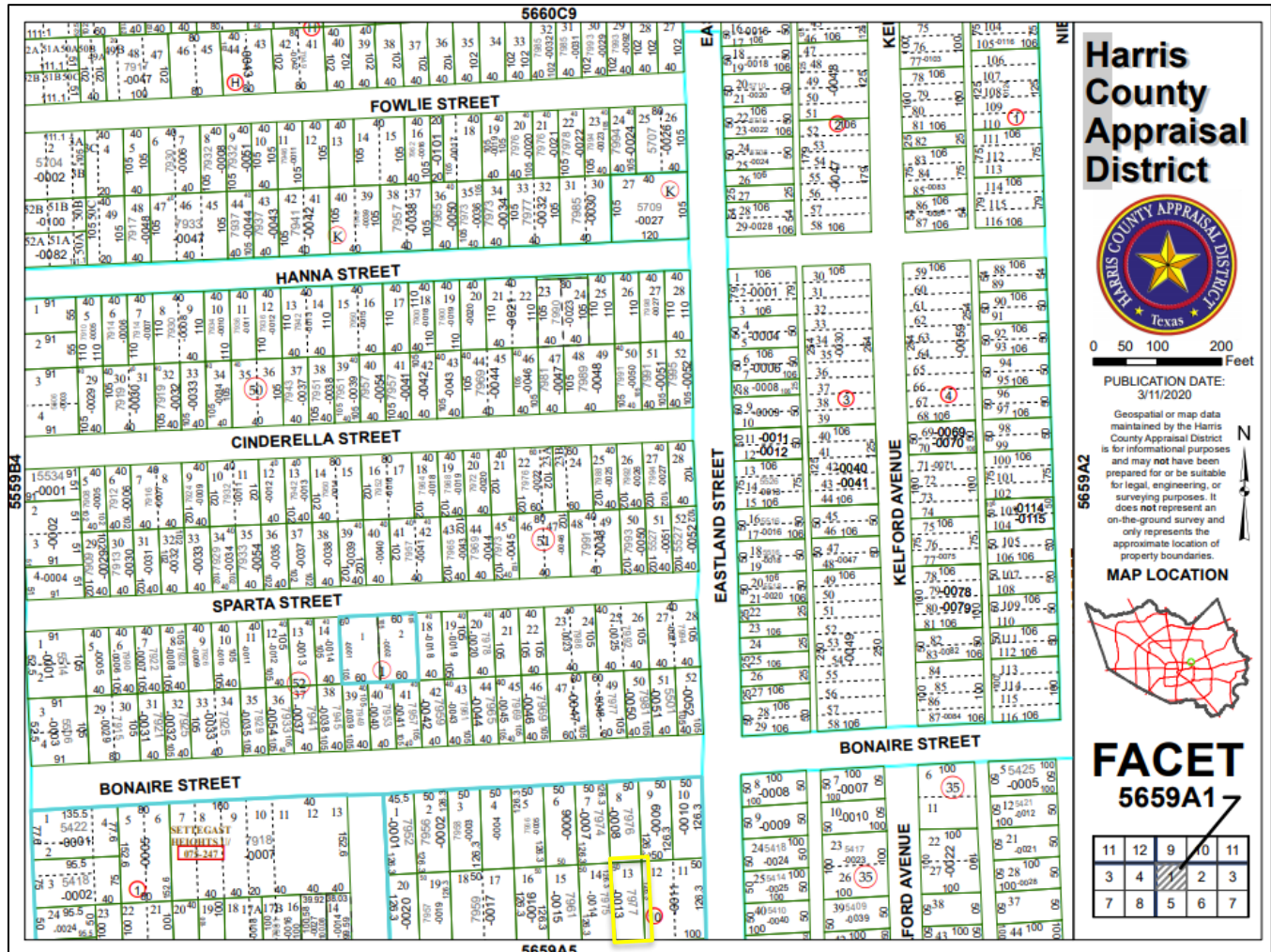


EXHIBIT C
GRAND OPENING SETTEGAST HEIGHTS, ADVERTISEMENT
JANUARY 14, 1948
THE BRENT HOUSE
7977 TATE STREET, HOUSTON, TEXAS 77028

C-41322 **EVE. F-0408. V-5309**

GRAND OPENING
Settegast Heights

Settgast Heights. You had better hurry if you want to select a homesite in this ideal location. We only have a few lots and they will go fast. Guaranteed title.

MR. CLARK

C-7615 **W-95142**

SOURCE: HOUSTON CHRONICLE DIGITAL ARCHIVES

EXHIBIT D
SETTEGAST GARDENS SECTIONS 3 & 4
JUNE 19, 1954
THE BRENT HOUSE
7977 TATE STREET, HOUSTON, TEXAS 77028

16i. Colored Property

LOTS

SETTEGAST GARDENS

Sections 3 and 4 just opened.
Near North Loop and Settegast
School. Bus service, shelled streets,
lights, gas and telephone. Don't
be too late **AGAIN**. A small de-
posit will hold your lot. Come to
6201 SETTEGAST STREET (north
of hall park) or call for appoint-
ment.

CHAS. E. BUCKNER CO.
OR-2627 * **ME-6773**

SOURCE: HOUSTON CHRONICLE DIGITAL ARCHIVES